



BIG OAKS

Newsletter of Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge & Big Oaks Conservation Society

A Word From the President

By Jim Leveille

Fall 2012



Jim Leveille

This will be my last column as President of BOCS. It is hard to believe that it has been four years since I stepped into the position. My first official act was signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the INANG that established BOCS as caretakers of Old Timbers Lodge. We have accomplished a lot at the Lodge, investing many hours of labor as well as over \$44,000 in grant monies on the electric/waterline replacement and chimney/roof repair projects. Much work remains: the roof and sanitation systems being the most prominent.

Besides the Lodge, BOCS has established itself as a reliable partner of the refuge staff. Our active participation in the youth deer and turkey hunts, Outdoor Women, and Take A Kid Fishing Day is essential to the success of these large public events. This enthusiastic support proves that the local community is engaged and interested in the future of the refuge. The biennial publication of the BOCS/refuge newsletter creates, not only a public record of Big Oaks, but also serves as a valuable outreach tool. It is important that it remains a regular and high quality part of our efforts.

Moving forward, our refuge faces many challenges and perhaps even threats. Budget pressures could again result in diminished staffing or even consolidation with Muscatatuck NWR. The loss of "our own" refuge staff and facilities would diminish BONWR's accessibility to the public. We alone, as citizen volunteers and non-employees, have the right and responsibility to influence elected and appointed officials in defense of the refuge. No one else will do it. The uncertain status of Old Timbers Lake Dam is also of great concern. The Army has proposed removing the dam and draining the lake as one way of bypassing needed dam repairs. I don't have to tell you what an impact that would have on all facets of the refuge operation and public use.

I would like to thank Dr. Joe Robb and all those individuals (too numerous to mention lest I leave someone out) who have helped me the last four years. Whether you are BOCS, FWS, IN Guard/ANG or Army, I have appreciated and relied on your assistance. One individual I will mention by name is my wife, Sara, whose countless hours of "admin support", volunteer labor and patience have allowed me to hold this title.

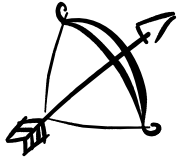
As president, I have sought to improve communications and to marshal our BOCS resources to achieve operational goals: successful refuge events, newsletters, Lodge preservation, and refuge advocacy. With my departure, as well as that of other board members, officer positions and leadership styles will change. Much work remains to be done. The new leadership of BOCS will need everyone's help to further our refuge. I hope you will join me in assisting them.

The Refuge Staff would like to thank Jim and all the BOCS Board members for their hard work. Thank you!

Calendar of Events and Information

Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge and Big Oaks Conservation Society
2012/2013 Fall and Winter Calendar of Events

October



- 1..... Public Use Day. The refuge is open most Mondays and Fridays for fishing, squirrel hunting, sight-seeing, and hiking. (Check the refuge website for an updated schedule.)
- 1.....BOCS Annual Year Begins—Renew your membership (The form is in the back of this newsletter.)
- 13.....Old Timbers Lodge Clean-up Day
- 13-14.....State Drawn 2-Day Archery Hunt
- 20-21.....State Drawn 2-Day Archery Hunt
- 27-28.....State Drawn 2-Day Archery Hunt

November

- 2.....Public Use Day
- 2.....Youth Hunt Workshop
- 3.....Refuge Drawn Youth Hunt
- 4.....State Drawn 1-Day Gun Hunt
- 5.....State Drawn 1-Day Gun Hunt
- 10-11.....State Drawn 2-Day Gun Hunt
- 17-18.....State Drawn 2-Day Gun Hunt
- 20-21.....State Drawn 2-Day Gun Hunt
- 23.....Refuge Closed to Public Use Until Mid-April



December

- 7.....BOCS Christmas Party at Old Timbers Lodge at 6:00pm. (See page 13 for details.)
- 15.....Christmas Bird Count

January

Winter Speaker Series begins at BOCS meetings.

February

Jefferson Salamanders breeding. Spring is near!

March

Fire Season on the refuge. Crawfish Frogs breeding.

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New Classes Offered at Outdoor Women at Big Oaks

By Denise Leiske



Participants of the Archery Class at OWBO, Photo by Joey Leveille:

Mother Nature blessed us with an absolutely beautiful day for the 68 attendees of OWBO 2012! The planning committee comprised of BOCS members & BONWR Staff did an outstanding job with planning and organizing our event.

Self Defense, Geology, and Backyard Habitat were new classes this year. Native American Beadwork returned this year and continues to be a hit. Tammy Davis, from Hardy Lake, wowed everyone during our lunch break, with her raptor presentation featuring a Bald Eagle.

We read your reviews and will be making changes in classes and locations, such as having our Fly Fishing class at the lake.

We love to see familiar faces every year and ask you to invite friends and family to join us. What a great yearly Mother/Daughter, Grandmother/Granddaughter, Sorority Sister event to look forward to! In 2013 we'll "Shake it up" with new classes, lunch options, and more information on our website.

We want to thank merchants, BOCS members and volunteers who so graciously supported our event this year. Without community support, we would not be able to have such a successful and well attended event. Thank you to the BONWR staff and interns, for all of their time and effort. They did a fantastic job contacting instructors, setting up, and providing transportation wherever we needed it. Keep up to date with OWBO on Facebook, and "Like" us. We hope you will join us again for OWBO 2013!

Who's New on the Refuge

Andrew Hoffman, Intern

Andrew recently finished his masters in biology at Missouri State University and is currently looking to enter a Ph. D. program. He completed his undergraduate degree in biology at Hanover College and did his undergraduate research on the behavioral ecology of crawfish frogs at Big Oaks. He has also been involved with projects investigating the breeding ecology and movement patterns of crawfish frogs on the refuge. During his undergraduate time at Hanover, Andrew helped Dr. Daryl Karns with his herpetofaunal surveys throughout the refuge and



Andrew Hoffman

is now working to compile these records into a comprehensive report on the reptiles and amphibians of Big Oaks while continuing further survey work. In the future, Andrew hopes to obtain his Ph.D. and seek employment as a professor of biology.

Who's New on the Refuge *Continued from pg. 3*



Bailey Uetrecht

Bailey Uetrecht, Intern

Bailey Uetrecht, a returning intern for Big Oaks, is from Cincinnati, OH and is a junior at Purdue University in the Biology, Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Program. In 2011, Bailey worked as an intern during the deer hunts and came back to join the crew for the summer of 2012. At Big Oaks, Bailey studied the water quality of streams on the refuge and found that there were slight, but significant differences in the water on the east side of the refuge versus the west side. Bailey enjoys hiking, traveling, and underwater hockey. After she graduates she hopes to get her masters degree.

Tess Piening, Intern



Tess Piening

Tess Piening interned at Big Oaks NWR during the spring of 2010. After finishing her Bachelor's degree and spending a year working as a naturalist, she has decided to return to Big Oaks to gain more field experience in biology. Tess graduated from the University of Cincinnati in June 2011 with a degree in Biological Sciences, concentration in Evolution and Ecology, and a minor in Environmental Studies. During her senior year at UC, Tess conducted undergraduate research in the lab of Dr. George Uetz, studying the behavioral ecology of wolf spiders. After graduating, Tess spent a year working as a naturalist and outdoor educator at a local park district in Butler County, Ohio. Tess left her job with the parks in order to return to Big Oaks in hopes of gaining more experience in biology before (hopefully) starting graduate school in 2013. In her spare time, Tess loves traveling, cooking, and pretty much anything outdoors, particularly backpacking, hiking, paddling, and cycling. Tess also loves spending time with family and friends, including her boyfriend

Pat, two crazy dogs, Indi and Franny, and pet boa constrictor, Tulua.

Dave Papanu, Intern



Dave Papanu

David Papanu is a senior at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. He recently went to a Fish and Wildlife Refuge intern conference in Minneapolis, MN. At the conference he talked about invasive forest plant surveys on Big Oaks NWR. These surveys consisted of identifying invasive nonnative plants, choosing the best eradication methods, and monitoring invasive plants to discover best elimination methods. Some of the most common inva-

sive species found on the refuge were Stilt grass, Multiflora rose, Japanese honeysuckle, and Creeping Jenny. Upcoming projects for David are the eradication and monitoring of the invasive plants. Along with his fellow interns he is working on a Crawfish frog experiment, mudpuppy survey, and a water quality experiment for the refuge. Future plans for David is to finish college and to find a job internationally to help with endangered species.

Stephanie Bishir, Intern

Stephanie Bishir is a recent graduate from Hanover College with a bachelor’s degree in Biology and is planning on continuing her education to receive a master’s degree in Biology. She is returning to Big Oaks from last summer when she implemented a small mammal survey on the refuge. This year she has been helping out with various



Stephanie Bishir

projects on the refuge, including work done with the state endangered Crawfish frog and forest invasive surveys. She is enjoying her time here once again and is looking forward to what the coming months have to offer.

Patrick Mulrey, Fire Intern

Our newest fire intern Patrick Mulrey started this past July. He spent the last summer learning how to farm organically at a teaching farm outside of Cincinnati. He attended the University of Cincinnati. He is interested in different forms of land management as well as environmental stewardship. When Patrick is not here at the refuge he enjoys cycling, hiking, backpacking, and walking his dogs. In the future he would like to finish his bachelor’s degree and continue with fire.

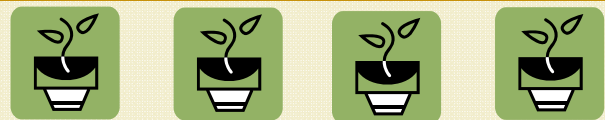


Patrick Mulrey

Are You Doing Your Part?

by Laura Lake

Sandra and Jerry Wallin from Vevay, IN are doing their part to consume less and make less waste by working from home and doing organic gardening. By gardening organically, they are avoiding the transportation of food from far distances and they produce food with greater nutritional value than commercially grown food. Their suggestion is if you do not have space in your yard for a garden, you can use containers on your patio. Thanks Sandra and Jerry!



Do you know of any good ways to Use, Re-use, and Recycle?

Email me to share your ideas.
laura_lake@fws.gov

Academy for Refuge Friends

By Dr. Jim Jackson

As BOCS vice-president, I joined Friends' groups from National Wildlife Refuges across the United States for Friend Academy 5. Attendance was awarded by a national competitive grant. The Academy took place July 23-27 at the USFWS National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

Academy participants gained skills and knowledge in working with refuge managers and staff, fund raising, grant application, refuge advocacy, activities planning, building membership, board development, engaging the community and community organizations in refuge support, and ways for friends groups to support their refuge more effectively. The structure and funding of the National Fish and Wildlife Service and National Wildlife Refuges was presented in detail.

We had a full daily schedule from 8:00am to 5:00pm; in addition, there were two evening sessions from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. NCTC also hosted an advanced training academy for refuge managers and a day of joint academic sessions took place. We spent the day in classes together for small group discussions, lecture, and problem-solving exercises with refuge managers.

I found the training extremely valuable, as well as energizing and, in some aspects, inspiring. The NCTC staff worked us hard and delivered a very high-quality educational experience. I was extremely impressed with the professionalism and high expectations of the USFWS personnel, and how committed they are to the overall mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The knowledge and experience I gained at the Academy will be put to good use in both the short and long term to benefit our BOCS organization and refuge. I hope to share much of this with the refuge personnel, BOCS board, and BOCS membership over the coming year.



Dr. Mark Madison showing illegal duck decoys from the 1920's, Photo by Dr. Jim Jackson



National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV
USFWS Photo

Several things from the Academy were particularly impressive to me. First, friends groups are valued by the NFWS. Refuges rely on us much more than I realized. We, as refuge friends, can fund-raise and advocate for our refuge in ways the refuge staff cannot. Secondly, the National Wildlife Refuge System is very much aware of and appreciative of what our group and personal efforts are worth to them, both in terms of monetary value as well as tangible and intangible benefits. In graduating from the Academy program we were told, "You are truly now one of us, in our NFWS family; our doors are opened to you and you now have full access to NFWS staff resources and support."

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Oakdale School Still Stands after all these Years

By Ken Knouf

A year ago, BOCS hosted a second ice cream social at Oakdale School, just inside the south boundary of the refuge along Morgan Road. As I remember we had a few folks attend that had a family connection with the school—either their parents or grandparents were alumni. Most of you know Oakdale as that 1869 one room limestone structure that’s a little rough around the edges and needing some good TLC.

Many thanks are owed to Dave Bear and his building trades’ students and to the Jefferson County Preservation Council for repairs that has been done. If it wasn’t for their efforts, the little building might not even be standing, but this begs a question. Over the years many have asked, “Why is Oakdale still standing when every other historic structure on the refuge (with the obvious exception of Old Timbers) was demolished or left to fall?”

The answer is really pretty simple. That small school house that served students from 1869 to 1941 also served the Army—as a much needed target storage facility that could withstand the constant concussion of sound waves caused by test firing from a nearby firing position. Although there was nothing fancy about the school, its limestone construction and an iron tie rod that held the structure together made this one tough little building. Next time you travel up Morgan Road and stop at Oakdale, look at the anchors on the east and west gable ends and appreciate how they have held that rod taut for over 140 years. And then consider what Oakdale has endured—from up to 55 rambunctious students crammed into the building one year to loud destructive booming many years later. Truly amazing!!



Oakdale School

Donated Lawn Tractor

By Jim Leveille

Cheryl Roberts of Madison, wife of Indiana National Guard Lt Col Dave Roberts, has donated an “experienced” lawn tractor to the cause of keeping Old Timbers’ lawns manicured. Cheryl contacted BOCS neighbor, Jim Leveille, with the offer of the mower. She admitted that her teenage sons had been heavy-footed operators of the 18 horse power 42” cut Craftsman, but she wondered if BOCS might be able to use it. Member Bill Hughes, known for his mechanical skills, looked over the machine and determined that, with some new parts and tinkering, it may be up to the task. The refurbished mower will be kept at the storage shed at the Lodge, and, starting next spring, members will be able to sign up to mow the immediate yard areas around Old Timbers.



Donated Lawn Tractor, Photo by Jim Leveille

Refuge Manager's Spotlight Frequently Asked Questions During the Deer Hunt

By Joe Robb

As the Big Oak's staff gear up for our fall deer hunt, we get bombarded with questions before and during the season. This column will attempt to answer some of these common questions and offer other insights to this busy time of year. We have to do many tasks to prepare for the deer season. One is to make sure roads are maintained, culverts are repaired, and signage is replaced and visible. We begin reserving hunts on selected dates in September and October and begin giving deer hunter safety briefings on October 1st. Deer hunters increase economic benefits to the local communities by staying at hotels and campgrounds in the area, and they visit restaurants and stores to eat and to buy supplies. Their refuge hunt permit fees increase our capability to keep roads open and fund our Park Ranger and Intern programs as well. They are also an important management tool to maintain our deer herd at healthy levels. We appreciate our deer hunters! What follows are a sampling of frequently asked questions (FAQ's); more detailed FAQ's are on the refuge's website (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/BigOaks/FAQ.htm>)

How do hunters apply for the Big Oaks NWR hunt?

Hunters register for the hunts through the Indiana DNR website (www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild). Additional opportunities are possible by participating in 'no-show' drawing each morning of every hunt day at 6:00 AM (Gun) or 7:00 AM (Archery) to fill empty slots. We typically do not fill up to capacity during deer hunts!

How many hunters can hunt deer at Big Oaks?

Usually up to 420 hunters can hunt during a deer hunt. Hunt areas can hold 2 to 14 hunters; hunt areas vary from 58 acres (Area 75) to 1470 acres (Area 3).

What areas can hunters hunt?

Numbered areas indicated on the refuge map are all available to hunt. However, hunters may only hunt their area the day of the hunt. Closed areas are strictly off limits!

Are there any new regulations for the 2012 hunting season?

Archery Hunters who have a valid fall turkey license can also harvest 1 turkey during their hunt (the turkey counts toward their state bag limit). Hunters can only use the State Firearm Season License during the State Gun Season to harvest a buck; military/refuge firearm licenses may be used to take deer of either sex on the special hunt area. Bonus Antlerless licenses can also be used to harvest antlerless deer on Big Oaks NWR in 2012. Crossbows will be allowed during archery season for hunters with a Crossbow deer license.

How many deer can hunters harvest and of what sex?

There is a limit of 2 bucks/hunter with the harvest and check-in of an antlerless deer for each type of hunt (2 for archery and 2 for gun). Without the check-in of an antlerless deer, the limit is 1 buck/hunter with all archery licenses and 1 buck/hunter with all firearm licenses. Hunters can continue to harvest antlerless deer if they have a valid military/refuge license or Bonus Antlerless License. This encourages the harvest of does which is a powerful management tool for controlling the deer herd. The harvest has ranged 356 to 805 in recent years; usually the harvest is around 400-500.

Can hunters scout hunting areas prior to the hunt?



The only areas open to scouting prior to hunting seasons are those areas in the day-use portion of the refuge (see refuge map). Day-use areas may be accessed on public use days. The refuge use to have designated scout days, but this led to more problems since most of the hunters bunched up at the same scrape/rub that they had previously seen on their scout day.

What weapons are allowed for deer hunting at Big Oaks NWR?

All legal state of Indiana permitted firearms and handguns for deer hunting will be allowed as legal weapons during the gun hunt. All archery weapons are subject to state regulations.

Where do I check my deer in upon harvest?

Big Oaks NWR has its own check station. You must check your deer in at the refuge office (Building 125).

Have any deer at Big Oaks been infected with chronic wasting disease?

No. The Big Oaks NWR deer herd was sampled and all the deer tested negative for the disease. Refuge staff will continue to be on the lookout for the chronic wasting disease on the refuge.

What licenses are available to hunters to use during the Big Oaks NWR deer hunt?

Archery licenses include: Regular archery, Extra archery, Crossbow License, Bonus Antlerless, and Military Refuge Licenses. Gun licenses include: Regular Firearm, Bonus Antlerless, and Military Refuge Licenses. The Regular Firearm License can only be used during the State Firearm Season (November 17 to December 2 in 2012). Lifetime and Youth licenses contain all the previous licenses, so those hunters should always use the military refuge license. The refuge does not sell licenses!

What refuge permits must hunters have to hunt on Big Oaks?

Hunters must have the Big Oaks NWR hunting permit. Hunt Permit fees (\$10) are only waived for those 15 or under; Hunt Permits will be \$5 for holders of the Senior Pass (available at the refuge for \$10 for those 62 or older) or holders of the Access Pass (for those permanently disabled).

Do hunters need a hunter safety verification prior to hunting Big Oaks NWR?

State regulations apply at Big Oaks NWR; those hunters born after December 31, 1986 will need hunter safety verification. An exception to this rule will be for those hunters who possess an Indiana "Apprentice License," which is to encourage new hunters to learn about the sport.

Is a partner mandatory when hunting at Big Oaks NWR?

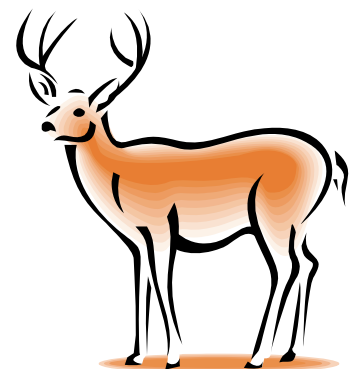
Yes. All hunters are required to have a partner. If you are a selected hunter you may invite a different partner each day of your hunt.

When can I view the required safety video before hunting on Big Oaks NWR?

The video can be viewed beginning October 1st on Mondays, Fridays, and the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month at 7:00am, 12:00pm, and 3:00pm. The video can also be viewed on hunt days at 4:30AM (Gun) and 5:30AM (Archery). Be sure to check if the refuge is closed due to a federal holiday.

What are refuge hours during the hunt at Big Oaks NWR?

Big Oaks refuge office hours are from 5:30AM to 8:00PM during the archery hunt and 4:30AM to 7:00PM during the gun hunt. The office opens at 4:30AM (Gun)/5:30AM(Archery) to begin checking hunters in until 6:00AM (Gun)/7:00AM(Archery).



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Big Oaks NWR is Unique in Many Ways

By Beth Black

If a person were to try to describe Big Oaks NWR in a few short paragraphs, those paragraphs would never be able to do it justice. Now consider the person that might be writing these paragraphs. Depending on their perspective, you would have a wide variety of descriptions. Take, for example, someone who works at the refuge, such as Joe Robb. He might describe (usually with great enthusiasm) the diverse habitat found here and how valuable that habitat is for the wildlife that either lives here or migrates through. Now consider the perspective of someone who worked here when it was Jefferson Proving Ground. The words that they might convey would be entirely different, perhaps describing the testing of munitions or the building of Old Timbers Lake.

Now I ask you to step back one more time to the perspective of the residents of this area before it became



Refuge Photo of Norma Truex as she peers over the bridge at Big Creek

Army owned. Many of those former residents are still alive and have very vivid memories of the lives they lived on the family farm. One such person is Norma Jean (Brown) Truex who grew up near Jinestown. Her son Marvin became interested in knowing more about the farm where his mother lived until the age of 16. That farm was located near Big Creek. Without realizing that the refuge staff would be willing to work with him to get both him and his mother to the old home site, Marvin began to explore the area south of the firing line. At some point he found his way to our office and discovered that indeed we would be happy to work with him and help him put together the details of his mother's past.

Norma began to relay her memories to Marvin and he started to document them. This project has taken him over a year to research. Using Soil Survey maps, US Government maps from the pre-JPG era and Google Earth, Marvin tracked down more information and stories to add to the research. Marvin wrote by hand the stories that his mother related to him. The first draft was 39 pages long. Now he has added more stories and has typed the document as well. His report is now 61 pages with new additions still coming in! This is a fun read and it is so interesting to know about the way folks lived back then.

This past March, Marvin arranged for his mom to come visit her old home site as well as the former home sites of some of her family members and friends. She wasn't able to hike into the farm site (due to a sore knee), but we drove all the roads and Norma explored the old bridge across Big Creek. I had a most enjoyable early spring day hearing about the old neighborhood and visiting with both Marvin and Norma.

The experience of having your property become an Army munitions testing facility is a unique one. Often, we receive phone calls from former residents or descendants of residents who have an interest in seeing the

Continued on pg. 11

New Activities at Take a Kid Fishing

By Jim Leveille

The tenth annual Take A Kid Fishing Day was held Saturday, July 21. An enthusiastic group of 93 kids and 80 parents enjoyed the warm and sunny day at Old Timbers Lake. A casting contest was held with winners Eric Williams, Alex Williams, Weaver Geisler and Spencer Johnson taking home new rod and reel combos. Additional raffle prizes of fishing rods and tackle were won by other youth. The prizes and food were provided by event sponsors RKO Enterprises of Madison, the Madison local Wal-Mart, and DMF Bait Company. Four popular new activities were added this year. First there was a live snake and reptile tent, where refuge intern, Andrew Hoffman, displayed and let the braver anglers handle various local snakes. Also, refuge maintenance technician, Kerry Brinson, and BOCS volunteer, Dave Bear, assisted kids in building their own cane poles from bamboo harvested on the refuge. Dave Bear also demonstrated knots and a Knot Tying Tent. Finally, Rob Cooper and Randy Spry with Chelsea Bass Masters displayed the latest in bass boat technology and tactics. At the joint FWS/BOCS “after-action meeting”, it was decided to continue these activities and to extend next year’s event longer into the day.



Andrew Hoffman at the Reptile Tent
Photo by Beth Black

Refuge Manager’s Spotlight Continued from pg. 9

Can I change areas during a hunt?

Not unless the area is completely empty. Changing areas can bother other hunters and it is difficult to manage the switching in the office. This method we use was used by the Army and was grandfathered in for FWS.

Big Oaks NWR is Unique in Many Ways Continued from pg. 10

old family home site. This presents an interesting challenge. For some people, such as Louis Munier, who’s home site is the most intact of any home site on the refuge, the combination of rugged terrain and accessibility through the depleted uranium area make it challenging to visit. However, when Louis and Norma do get the opportunity to visit their former home sites, they both have vivid memories of life, family, friends and adventures in the old neighborhood.

Another new twist on this aspect of the refuge is the writing of a novel of historical fiction. Recently a writer who lives in Wisconsin toured the refuge with Louis Munier, Mike Moore, Ron Harsin and me. She is doing background research for her book about the years just prior to the development of proving grounds all over the country.

Interested in knowing more about your ancestor’s home place? Schedule a tour and we will do our best to help you investigate those places.

BONWR 2012 Butterfly Count hits a new record high-count of species

By Beth Black

On Saturday, August 4, Big Oaks hosted its 14th annual North American Butterfly count. In spite of the cloudy conditions in the morning, the 11 persistent counters were rewarded with a new record and sunnier skies as the day progressed. A total of 52 different species of butterflies was observed. The previous record was 51. Ironically, the total number of butterflies observed was below average for the count with only 1,133 individuals observed. The average for the count is 1,939. There were a total of nine Dainty Sulphur butterflies observed; this is a new species for the refuge. The counters were also treated to another new count species, the Common Checkered-Skipper and the observation of a Northern Cloudywing was only the second time in the history of the Big Oaks count. Insects like butterflies are just one species of wild-life that benefits from the 50,000 acres of habitat that Big Oaks provides. In addition to the vast grasslands, where many of the species were observed this year, there are large forest blocks and 6,000 acres of wetlands. Interested in joining the refuge for a butterfly count in the future? Don't be intimidated, it isn't necessary to know all the butterflies. Each team is comprised of experienced counters as well as beginners. Once you begin to learn a few butterflies, you'll find it can be quite addictive and fun!



Photo by Andrew Hoffman
Dainty Sulphur

flies observed; this is a new species for the refuge. The counters were also treated to another new count species, the Common Checkered-Skipper and the observation of a Northern Cloudywing was only the second time in the history of the Big Oaks count. Insects like butterflies are just one species of wild-life that benefits from the 50,000 acres of habitat that Big Oaks provides. In addition to the vast grasslands, where many of the species were observed this year, there are large forest blocks and 6,000 acres of wetlands. Interested in joining the refuge for a butterfly count in the future? Don't be intimidated, it isn't necessary to know all the butterflies. Each team is comprised of experienced counters as well as beginners. Once you begin to learn a few butterflies, you'll find it can be quite addictive and fun!

Challenge...

Can you reduce your trash output over the next several months? Think about buying items with packaging that can be recycled instead of thrown away.

Academy for Refuge Friends

Continued from pg. 6

The other highly beneficial aspect of the Academy was getting to know our classmates. They are an outstanding and energetic group of people. Almost all of them have faced or are facing the same problems we have here at BOCS – a shrinking and aging membership, difficulty getting new and diverse members, full engagement of the membership in the activities of the group, enhancing community exposure and involvement, and fund raising. The graduates of the Academy have formed a group on Facebook to keep in touch.

In summary, NCTC is an exceptional place; it is an environmentally green walking-only campus in West Virginia. Wildlife is often encountered in morning walks or getting to class. The facility itself is remarkable, and fosters an atmosphere of friendliness and learning. Aside from the experiences mentioned above, I particularly enjoyed the archives of the NFWS housed at the campus; it is truly a national treasure.



Mission Statement: *To support the goals of wildlife conservation and habitat restoration at Big Oaks NWR; develop environmental education programs; enhance public awareness; encourage use and appreciation for the natural and cultural assets unique to Big Oaks.*

Annual Membership Dues/ 2012 Old Timbers Lodge Christmas Party

Dear BOCS Members,

The annual membership year begins October 1, 2012. We take great value in your membership and your participation helps to sustain our organization. If you have not renewed yet, we encourage you to do so with the form provided.

Our 5th annual Old Timbers Lodge Christmas Party is set for Friday, December 7th. It is a great way to start off the holiday season with fellowship, a belly full of food, beverage and nice warm fires. Alcoholic beverages are acceptable if you wish, but BYOB. Lifetime members and members with a current 2012/2013 membership are eligible to purchase tickets. If you have friends or relatives who wish to attend, they can join BOCS to do so. Cost is \$15.00/person this year, ages 14 and up. The fee will cover the catered meal and other expenses related to hosting the event. You may order your tickets when renewing dues and they will be sent to you via mail. Tickets must be purchased no later than November 25th. Our event quickly fills up so please don't delay.

Entry at Gate 6 will begin at 5:30pm until 6:15pm. The festivities will begin at 6:00pm with the meal being served at 6:30pm. There will be a silent auction and a "split the pot". Gate 6 will be the only gate open for Refuge access! To get to Gate 6: take US 421 N from Madison, turn left (west) onto 900 South for one mile, dead-ending at Gate 6, which is in Ripley County. If you have questions in regards to the Christmas Party at OTL, contact party chairperson, Carole Poffinbarger at (513)868-7679 or poffin@fuse.net.

Remember: Gate 6 will be open only to current BOCS members who have a ticket. We will need the names for our gate entry list. If you do not have a ticket, you cannot pay or enter at the gate. Don't miss out on this opportunity to attend a great holiday evening at the Lodge.

BOCS Yearly Membership (Oct. 2012 - Sept. 2013)

New Member _____

Renewing Member _____

Please select a category:

___ Youth \$5

Name(s) _____

___ Individual \$15

Address _____

___ Family \$25

City, State, Zip _____

___ Supporting \$25

Phone(s) _____

___ Lifetime (per Individual) \$150

E-mail _____

___ Corporate \$500

___ Number of Tickets for the Dec 7th Christmas Party - \$15 per person (must be a BOCS member to purchase tickets)

Name of BOCS Member attending _____

Spouse's Name (if attending) _____

Dependent Children's Names (if attending) _____

If you would like to join, or rejoin, the Big Oaks Conservation Society, please fill out this membership form and send along with your check to: **Big Oaks Conservation Society, P.O. Box 935, Madison, IN 47250**



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**Newsletter Editor
Laura Lake**

Special Thanks to:
Joe Robb and
Big Oaks Staff
Contributing Members

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Brian Winters - Fire Management Officer
Ben Walker - Wildlife Biologist
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**Big Oaks
Conservation Society
P.O. Box 935
Madison, IN 47250
www.bigoaks.org**

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